

# MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

## Success Stories from the Field

### **Mt Valley Farms Lumber Products**

#### **Mid-Pennsylvania Manufacturing Extension Partnership**

#### **Mountain Valley Farms And Lumber Products Turns By-Product Into Profit**

##### **Client Profile:**

Mountain Valley Farms and Lumber Products grows and buys standing timber, manufacturers lumber crates and pallets, and plants over 350 acres of apple and peach trees, which are grown for local processing plants. An ancillary business--Henry L. Taylor Trucking, LLC--provides freight hauling services to businesses across the eastern United States. Located in Biglerville, Pennsylvania, the company employs 85 full-time and seasonal workers.

##### **Situation:**

One of the by-products of Mountain Valley Farms and Lumber Product (MVF)'s lumber and pallet business is sawdust. In a search for more consistent demand and profits, MVF began to manufacture pressed sawdust logs and sell them under licensing agreement to a third-party, who took the product to market. After sales declined, the licensing agreement was dropped and MVF took the compressed logs to market under the name Blue Mountain Logs. Despite distribution contracts with regional retail and grocery chains, sales continued to flounder. The product is unique in the fire log industry in that the logs contain no petroleum or chemical by-products and therefore are functional for recreational burning and cooking purposes. MVF needed to find a way to get this unique product the attention it deserved. The company contacted MANTEC, a NIST MEP network affiliate and division of the Mid-Pennsylvania Manufacturing Extension Partnership, for assistance. As a long-time MANTEC client, MVF knew the organization could help.

##### **Solution:**

MANTEC helped MVF conduct consumer marketing research to identify the reasons the logs weren't selling. Research indicated that the product was very hard to light for the 'recreational burner.' Consumer testing showed that the product packaging was unappealing and did nothing to build consumer interest in purchase.

With a better understanding of the problems, MANTEC and MVF began to make changes. The packaging presented a number of production issues, and MANTEC led a series of projects aimed at totally redesigning the package to increase shelf appeal and build consumer interest. The incorporation of easy lighting tabs make the package itself the starter mechanism, solving the main barrier to repeat purchases.

Additional marketing related projects identified sales and distribution

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channels, and created primary and secondary marketing materials (including an order-enabled website) for both end-consumer and distributors. MANTEC also made sure MVF obtained appropriate safety certifications to permit product distribution in Canada. The product has been released under a new name, 'Ready-Made Fire'™ by Blue Mountain Logs, and distribution agreements are in place.

### **Results:**

Improved and rebranded a product line to improve sales and grow profits.

Signed distribution deals with two major distributors; a third distribution deal is pending.

Finalizing a contract with a national home improvement chain for retail sales.

### **Testimonial:**

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